

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
ACDA-07 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DHA-02 AID-05 /100 W
-----121629Z 038471 /53

O P 121539Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1626
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY RABAT

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR CG FR MO MPOS
SUBJ: SHABA INVASION: FRENCH REACTION TO AIRLIFT FOR
MOROCCAN TROOPS

REF: PARIS 10499 (NOTAL)

BEGIN UNCLAS.

1. SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT SUNDAY OF THE FRENCH AIRLIFT
OF MOROCCAN TROOPS (REFTEL), ZAIRE HAS BEEN THE
PRINCIPAL ITEM IN THE MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES
HAVE COMMENTED ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES ON GISCARD'S
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DECISION. THE FLOOR LEADER OF THE PRESIDENT'S
INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY, ROBERT CHINAUD,
THOUGHT IT NORMAL FOR FRANCE TO SUPPORT "INTER-AFRICAN
ACTION AIMED AT SAFEGUARDING ZAIRE'S INDEPENDENCE" AND
CHARGED THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PC) BACKED ONLY
AFRICAN POLITICAL GOALS PURSUED BY CUBA AND THE SOVIET
UNION. THE CP FLOOR LEADER, ROBERT BALLANGER, DEMANDED

AN IMMEDIATE HALT TO THE AIRLIFT AND CALLED FOR ASSEMBLY DEBATE TODAY. IN A LETTER TO GISCARD, HE SAID, "A NEW STEP HAS BEEN MADE IMPLICATING FRANCE DIRECTLY IN THAT WAR," AND CLAIMED THAT THE MOVE WAS MADE IN COOPERATION WITH THE US AND NATO.

2. THE OTHER PARTIES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY WERE CAUTIOUS IN ASSESSING THE MOVE, WHILE SOCIALIST PARTY SPOKESMAN CLAUDE ESTIER CRITICIZED IT AS LIKELY TO LEAD TO GREATER FRENCH INVOLVEMENT.

3. THEMES OF MEDIA COMMENT INCLUDE THE NECESSITY FOR FRANCE TO ACT DUE TO THE FAILURE OF (OR ORDERS FROM) THE US TO DO SO, THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE CONFLICT, THE NEED TO REASSURE FRANCE'S AFRICAN FRIENDS, THE FAILURES OF THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT TO DEFEND ITSELF, AND THE UNCERTAINTY OVER FRANCE'S ABILITY TO EFFECT THE SITUATION IN THE FACE OF SUPER-POWER COMPETITION.

4. LE MONDE OF APRIL 12 SAID THAT THE FRENCH ACTION "MARKS THE SECRET INVOLVEMENT OF PARIS IN THE QUARREL BETWEEN MODERATES AND MILITANTS THAT IS TEARING THE CONTINENT APART . . . IT RINGS THE KNEEL OF A DIFFICULT REBALANCING OF (FRANCE'S) AFRICAN POLICY AND ESTABLISHES THE PREEMINENCE OF INTERDEPENDENCE WITH "FRIENDS" (OR "BUDDIES", TO USE THE MOROCCAN KING'S WORDS) OVER A MORE BALANCED VISION OF THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF PARIS . . . PARIS IS GIVING CREDIT TO THE SUSPICIONS AND ACCUSATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FLOWING FROM THE DELIVERY OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO PRETORIA, THE MAYOTTE AFFAIR, AND ITS SUPPORT OF TOO MANY DISCREDITED REGIMES . . . FOR A PROBLEMATIC GAIN, FRANCE WILL LOSE MUCH OF THE INFLUENCE AND SYMPATHY THAT IT STILL ENJOYED."

5. SUPPORTING GISCARD, RIGHT-WING L'AUORE SAID, "THE VACUUM LEFT IN AFRICA BY THE INDIFFERENCE OR COWARDICE OF MOST OF THE WESTERN COUNTRIES EXCITES THE KREMLIN'S APPETITE AND PUSHED FRANCE TO TAKE ALONE AN INITIATIVE IN ZAIRE THAT IS A WARNING TO SOVIET EXPANSIONISM . . . THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENT ON THIS WORLD-STIRRING INITIATIVE . . . IN HIS TELEVISION INTERVIEW TONIGHT . . . WILL ENABLE HIM TO SHOW HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE (MR. GISCARD D'ESTAING MADE HIS DECISION IN FULL SOVEREIGNTY, WITHOUT ANY COMPULSION), OF RESPECT FOR COOPERATION AGREEMENTS (WITH A THREATENED COUNTRY OF FRENCH-

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SPEAKING AFRICA) AND THE NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING
WESTERN INFLUENCE IN THIS CONTINENT WHICH IS HEAVILY
TOUCHED BY OUR CIVILIZATION AND WHOSE STRATEGIC
POSITIONS AND MINERAL RESOURCES AROUSE SO MUCH GREED."

6. THE LEFT OF CENTER QUOTIDIEN CRITICIZES IN THESE
TERMS. "AS IF HE WERE SHORT OF PROBLEMS, AS IF HE DID
NOT HAVE ENOUGH DIFFICULTIES TO OVERCOME, AS IF HE
WANTED TO LAY HIMSELF OPEN TO CRITICISM, THE FRENCH
PRESIDENT HAS JUST TAKEN A PERILOUS PATH BY DECIDING
TO GIVE LOGISTICAL AID TO ZAIRE . . . WHAT EXPLAINS THIS
DECISION? ECONOMIC REALISM, NEO-GAULLISM, SELF-
AFFIRMATION? YOU NEVER KNOW WITH GISCARD. IF ANY
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FIRM, BROAD AND LONG-TERM POLITICAL VISION IS INVOLVED, IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL EXPLAIN THIS TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE TONIGHT. BUT HE WILL FIND IT HARD TO INVOKE HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE 'GLOBALISM' WHICH HE MADE THE CORNERSTONE OF HIS INTERNATIONAL POLICY AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS SEVEN-YEAR TERM OF OFFICE."

7. COMMUNIST HUMANITE DECLARES, "ARE NOT THE INTERESTS OF FRANCE, OF FRANCE'S FRIENDSHIPS ON THE BLACK CONTINENT, AND OF ITS WORLD PRESTIGE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO AN UNDERTAKING THAT CONSISTS OF SUBSTITUTING FOR THE AMERICANS, MADE MORE CAUTIOUS BY THEIR SETBACKS IN VIETNAM."

8. A EUROPE ONE RADIO COMMENTATOR NOTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS CONSIDER THAT THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IS LIKELY TO JEOPARDIZE THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERFERENCE. "BY BACKING A STATE WHOSE DEMOCRATIC CHARACTER IS QUESTIONABLE, FRANCE ASSUMES THE RISK OF LOSING ITS CREDIT WITH MOST OF THE STATES OF THE THIRD WORLD. WITHOUT DISAPPROVING THE PRESIDENT, THE GAULLISTS ARE CAREFUL NOT TO APPLAUD. THEY ACCUSE THE COMMUNISTS OF SIDING SYSTEMATICALLY WITH THE USSR. THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A POLEMIC . . ."

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9. COMMENT: IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, FRENCH OPINION WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO STOP THE INVASION OF ZAIRE. WITH FULL COMPREHENSION OF THE RISKS, GISCARD HAS MADE A DECISION WHICH COULD MAKE HIM A HERO IF BY HIS ACTION HE IS PERCEIVED AS HAVING HELPED ARREST SOVIET EXPANSION IN AFRICA. NOT TO HAVE ACTED WOULD HAVE GREATLY COMPROMISED FRENCH RELATIONS WITH MODERATE AFRICANS. TO HAVE DONE SO AND THEN TO FAIL, WOULD NOT ONLY MAKE A SHAMBLES OF FRENCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(AND, IN GISCARD'S VIEW, WESTERN) POLICY IN AFRICA BUT ALSO INSURE THE VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN NEXT YEAR'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.
GAMMON

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